

# Occupy movement, workers shut ports

## Special to Workers World

Dec. 12 — Today, Occupy activists from Vancouver, Canada, to San Diego, Calif., disrupted and shut down West Coast ports in solidarity with port workers. Specifically, they embraced the port truckers' struggle for union recognition and efforts by the International Longshore Workers Union to fight union-busting in Longview, Wash. They were also responding to federally coordinated attacks on the Occupy movement across the country.

Once again, the largest protests were in **Oakland**, Calif. Despite continuous and well-publicized attempts by Oakland city officials and the Port of Oakland to discredit the port shutdown campaign, the all-day protest was massive. It started at 5 a.m. at the West Oakland Bay Area Rapid Transit station, in the shadow of the Port of Oakland.

More than 2,500 Occupy activists, teachers, other union members, students and unemployed youth from all over northern California marched on

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## Off death row after 30 years of torture

# Overflow crowd: 'Free Mumia NOW!'



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

By **Betsey Piette**  
Philadelphia

Dec. 13 — After nearly three decades on Pennsylvania's death row, former Black Panther Party member and world-renowned journalist, Mumia Abu-Jamal, was moved into transitional area at SCI Greene maximum security prison on Dec. 11, following an announcement by Philadelphia District Attorney Seth Williams earlier in the week that he would no longer seek Abu-Jamal's execution.

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On Oct. 11, 2011, the Supreme Court decided not to review a decision by the Third Circuit Court upholding a 2001 ruling by Federal Judge William Yohn that Abu-Jamal's 1982 death sentence had been unconstitutional. The district attorney's office had the option to pursue a new sentencing hearing, but sought to avoid the risk that a new jury might rule to release Abu-Jamal if new evidence was introduced.

The district attorney may have hoped that lifting the death sentence would also end the worldwide movement that has kept the pressure on the courts to free Abu-Jamal, but this gamble appears to have backfired.

## No life in prison — free Mumia now!

Two days after the district attorney's announcement, an overflow crowd of more than 1,000 people filled the balcony space at Philadelphia's National Constitution Center for an indoor rally initially planned to mark the 30th anniversary of Mumia Abu-Jamal's incarceration.

A highlight of the event was a phone call from Abu-Jamal, who thanked his supporters for helping win his victory against the death penalty. Maintaining his in-

nocence, Abu-Jamal promised to continue his fight for freedom, while urging ongoing organizing of the mass movement.

The Fraternal Order of Police had attempted to block this call by flooding Gov. Tom Corbett's office with phone calls and faxes earlier in the day. A group of off-duty police, on motorcycles and revving their engines at full throttle during Abu-Jamal's call-in, was also unsuccessful in their attempt to drown him out. While blatantly violating city noise ordinances, their protest was inaudible to the gathering inside.

The mood of the crowd — the largest to attend an event in support of Abu-Jamal in years — was celebratory, but determined that Abu-Jamal must not be left in prison for the rest of his life for a crime he did not commit. Under Pennsylvania law, capital juries have only two options — the death sentence or life in prison without parole.

Ramona Africa, one of the only survivors of the 1985 police bombing of a MOVE house in Philadelphia, stated that even though the state can't legally execute Abu-Jamal, "it does not mean they won't try to kill him. Officials

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# Doctor, heal thyself

# Clinton says U.S. will campaign for gay rights

By LeiLani Dowell

African-American lesbian activist, poet and writer Audre Lorde wrote that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” Published in 1984, her statement is a perfect response to U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s Dec. 6 announcement that the U.S. will supposedly be championing the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people around the world. Clinton gave her outrageously hypocritical remarks at an event recognizing International Human Rights Day in Geneva, Switzerland.

While Clinton speaks lofty words about the needs of LGBTQ people around the world, LGBTQ people in the U.S. continue to be discriminated against, denied marriage rights, harassed, subjected to police brutality, beaten and murdered. The rates of suicide and homelessness amongst LGBTQ youth in the U.S. continue to be appallingly high. Most importantly, LGBTQ people in the U.S. continue to resist the numerous attacks against our lives.

Once again, the U.S. has the audacity to present itself as some kind of authority with regard to human rights. While Clinton remarked that “we have more work to do to protect human rights at home,” the overwhelming bulk of her speech was directed at what other countries are doing wrong — making apparent that, in fact, the Obama administration has no plans to do any such work at home. In response to Clinton’s statement, writer and activist Sarah Schulman said: “What if a country has some gay rights but denies some residents fair trials, equal education and basic citizenship and employs racial supremacy, imposes one religious paradigm and runs illegal and immoral wars? Oh wait, that’s [the U.S.].” (Huffington Post, Dec. 7)

Clinton’s statement would be laughable if it were not so dangerous at the same time. For the U.S. has consistently used the “championing” of human rights around the world to facilitate its imperialist goals, including imposing brutal sanctions and waging outright war against countries that the U.S. claims don’t measure up to its own “standards.” The U.S. picks which countries to attack on their human rights record not based on their lack of human rights — which, of course, the U.S. has no

moral standing to judge upon anyway — but on whether or not they bow down to U.S. imperialism.

A prime example of this is Afghanistan, where the continuing U.S. imperialist war being waged there is still presented as a war to liberate Afghan women. In 2010, WW writer Joyce Chediak pointed out that “some gains for women in Kabul had been reported since 2001, as opposed to women in the countryside, who face the dislocation, death, hunger, hardship and lack of social accountability caused by the U.S. bombings. But today even women in Kabul face a severe backlash.” (“U.S. occupation increases violence against Afghan women,” Aug. 26, 2010) Assassinations of prominent women, beginning in 2005, have kept many women in Kabul from engaging in public life.

As with LGBTQ rights, one can look at the U.S.’s track record on women’s rights to see just how manipulative assertions about liberating women in other countries are. Just last week, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services overruled a Food and Drug Administration decision to make over-the-counter emergency contraception available to women of all ages.

It’s telling that Clinton’s announcement comes on the eve of the presidential election season. For four years, the Obama administration has had the opportunity to fight for LGBTQ rights in the U.S., and, with the exception of the repeal of the “don’t ask, don’t tell” law banning openly LGBTQ people from serving in the military, it has done nothing. Now, in an attempt to woo the LGBTQ vote, comes the announcement that the oppression of LGBTQ people in other places is wrong. The irony of it is that with the repeal of DADT, in the middle of a devastating economic crisis, the U.S. can now recruit LGBTQ people to fight in the very imperialist wars that they claim are being waged for “human rights.”

Lorde’s statement is incredibly apt — a system that uses special oppression as a tool to keep the working class divided can never be used to dismantle that oppression. Clinton’s paying lip service to the equality of LGBTQ people will not change the fact that LGBTQ people, along with our true allies in struggle, will necessarily continue to challenge and ultimately defeat imperialism’s wars against us at home and abroad. □

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## Commentary

# ‘Whose post office? Our post office!’

By Mike Eilenfeldt  
New York

Bronx and Harlem communities united with postal workers have been able to transform recent sham hearings the U.S. Postal Service has held in order to close 34 New York City post offices. Teach-ins, informational picket lines and news conferences around these hearings have attracted growing community support and anger, especially focused on the threatened closing of 17 branches in the Bronx.

Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe is fronting for Wall Street in a fraudulent privatization conspiracy to close 3,700 post offices nationwide. This could lead to the layoff of hundreds of thousands of workers, and con-

stitutes a viciously racist war on poor and multinational communities that depend on this vital service.

The Community-Labor United for Postal Jobs & Services Coalition has inspired community organizers and residents from the Manhattan neighborhood of Chelsea as well as Harlem and the Bronx to join hands. Chuck Zlatkin, legislative and political director of the American Postal Workers Union, testified at one hearing: “It is a manufactured crisis. No small post office shall be closed solely for operating at a deficit. That’s the law. We have to come together.” Johnnie Stevens, an organizer for the coalition, told Workers World: “We need a mass visibility campaign to alert labor and communities to the dangers of this postal crisis.” □

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Workers World Party (WWP) fights for socialism and engages in struggles on all the issues that face the working class & oppressed peoples — Black & white, Latino/a, Asian, Arab and Native peoples, women & men, young & old, lesbian, gay, bi, straight, trans, disabled, working, unemployed, undocumented & students.

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## ATLANTA

# Activists demand end to death penalty

By Dianne Mathiowetz  
Atlanta

Activists, mostly identified with the Occupy Atlanta movement, responded to a call by the International Action Center and the Campaign to End the Death Penalty for a Dec. 9 evening march and rally at the State Capitol.

Entitled “We the People Honor Troy Davis! Free Mumia!” the protest began in the central park that has been renamed Troy Davis Park by activists and went to the streets, taking two lanes of Peachtree

Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive without police interference. The marchers carried a casket with the words “Bury the Death Penalty” on it and illuminated their protest with glow sticks. Rally speakers heralded the recent decision by Pennsylvania authorities to end their attempt to execute Mumia Abu-Jamal but denounced his continued incarceration after being on death row for almost three decades for a police killing he did not commit.

The criminal lynching of Troy Davis by the state of Georgia on Sept. 21 motivated

the crowd to vow to campaign to end the racist death penalty. The protest returned to the streets after the rally with chants of “We are Troy Davis!” and “Brick by Brick, Wall by Wall, Free Mumia, Free them All!” reverberating in the night air.

A short time later, a “noise demonstration” was held in front of the Atlanta Detention Center to show solidarity with the jailed members of the 99 percent and to mark the first anniversary of the historic Georgia prisoners work stoppage that encompassed multiple facilities across the state.

On Dec. 9, 2010, organized largely through cell phones, thousands of prisoners refused to leave their cells. Rather than meet the just demands for an end to guard brutality, decent food, medical care, and fair and equal treatment, the Georgia authorities beat and transferred the leaders to other prisons. In recent weeks, there have been reports of renewed prisoner organizing and unrest at several state institutions. The largely youthful crowd beat drums, played boomboxes, chanted and blew whistles in a cacophony of noisy solidarity. □

## Off death row after 30 years of torture Overflow crowd demands: ‘Free Mumia NOW!’

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killed George Jackson in prison, and tried to get several different people to kill Leonard Peltier in prison.”

Johanna Fernandez, with Educators for Mumia, who co-hosted the event along with Pam Africa of International Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, echoed this concern. Fernandez said that the comment to the New York Times by Maureen Faulkner (widow of slain police officer Daniel Faulkner, killed Dec. 9, 1981) that Abu-Jamal should be put into general population “so someone can take care of him” effectively amounted to “this pretty white lady putting a hit out on him.”

Fernandez stated that the police investigation that led to Abu-Jamal’s conviction was riddled with corruption and tampered evidence. “The recently discovered Polokoff photographs that were taken at the crime scene reveal that Officer James Forbes, who testified in court that he properly handled the guns allegedly retrieved at the crime scene, appears holding the guns with his bare hands.”

Fernandez challenged District Attorney Williams to honor a 1995 promise by former District Attorney Lynn Abraham that she would “discard any cases where evidence surfaces that even one of the officers involved in an investigation lied in court or in written reports.” Fifteen of the 35 officers involved in collecting evidence in Faulkner’s death were “charged with tampering with evidence in an FBI probe that ended within days of Mumia’s trial,” Fernandez said.

Both Fernandez and attorney Michael Coard noted that the prosecution purposely withheld evidence in Abu-Jamal’s 1982 trial. Fernandez reported that prosecutor Joseph McGill knew that a driver’s license found in Faulkner’s pocket led police to Kenneth Freeman, a passenger in the car driven by Mumia’s brother, which Faulkner had stopped just before he was shot.

Freeman was picked out as the man fleeing the scene in a line-up by prosecution witness Cynthia White, who was



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

subsequently coerced by police to identify Abu-Jamal as the shooter. Other witnesses, never called to the stand, identified “the man fleeing the scene” as the shooter. McGill withheld this information at Abu-Jamal’s trial.

Coard challenged a police claim that they “forgot” to perform the standard gunpowder test on Abu-Jamal’s hands. “I believe they certainly ran that test and it came up negative,” Coard said.

### A call for int’l campaign to free Mumia

Prominent civil rights attorney Lennox Hinds stated, “The Third Circuit Court ruled that the death sentence was illegal, and that Abu-Jamal was wrongly held on death row for 30 years. That violates the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution against cruel and unlawful punishment.” Hinds also noted that the U.S. signed on to an international law banning the practice of prolonged solitary confinement. Held in a tiny cell, Abu-Jamal has been denied direct human contact for over 29 years.

Hinds, a permanent representative to the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, vowed to “launch an inter-



WW PHOTOS: JOE PIETTE

Pam Africa and Monica Moorehead

national movement,” including a petition to the United Nations, challenging Abu-Jamal’s continued imprisonment.

On a panel about the key role that the movement has played and must continue to play in the fight to free Abu-Jamal, Monica Moorehead, speaking on behalf of Workers World Party and the International Action Center, welcomed the participation of Occupy Philadelphia activists in the audience.

Moorehead said, “We are occupying the Constitution Center, liberating it for several hours, in recognition that if not for the millions of people around the world who filled courtrooms, blocked streets and risked arrest, Mumia Abu-Jamal would not be alive today.

“For thirty years, Mumia’s resistance to his individual condition stood as a symbol of resistance to all forms of capitalist repression. Occupy Philadelphia, even though it was just evicted, exposed the role of police repression, long an issue for Black and Latina/Latino communities and in Mumia’s incarceration.”

Addressing the gathering by video, Archbishop Desmond Tutu called for Abu-Jamal’s release, stating: “It is clear that Mumia should never have been on death row in the first place. Justice will not be served by relegating him to prison for the rest of his life — yet another form of death sentence. I call on District Attorney Seth Williams to rise to the challenge of reconciliation, human rights and justice ... and allow Mumia Abu-Jamal to be immediately released.”

Other participants in this historic rally included the IMPACT Repertory Theatre, poet laureate Amiri Baraka, Immortal Technique, Michelle Alexander, Marc Lamont Hill, Estela Vasquez, Vijay Prashad, Suzanne Ross and the Universal African Dance and Drum Ensemble.

Rounding out the program, keynote

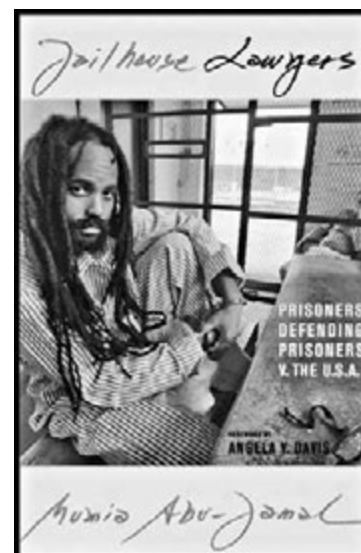
speaker Cornel West challenged the audience to continue the fight until Abu-Jamal is released. “Mumia’s spirit has not been broken for 30 years. He is a free man on death row for telling the truth.”

“We are at the beginning of a new revolutionary wave against Wall Street, against militarism, against the prison-industrial complex, against plutocracy. You’ve got to take a risk.”

Taking up West’s challenge, dozens of people attending a follow-up gathering at the Germantown Event Center on Dec. 10 participated in two working groups on Abu-Jamal’s behalf. They included members of Occupy Kentucky, Occupy Wall Street and students from Ursinus College, who heard about the event at Occupy Philly.

A taskforce was set up to re-launch a campaign to focus unrelenting public pressure on the U.S. Attorney General and Department of Justice to conduct civil rights investigations into Abu-Jamal’s case. A second working group was formed to continually challenge the district attorney’s office on the merits of Abu-Jamal’s grounds for release, drawing on international human rights standards and international support.

One proposal of this group was to establish an “Occupy for Justice” movement to connect Abu-Jamal’s struggle with the fight against police brutality and the prison-industrial complex. □



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and bookstores around the country



# At Dec. 10 action, machinists say: ‘Our unions will not be busted!’

By Bryan G. Pfeifer  
Manitowoc, Wis.

Thousands of labor, community and student supporters joined a solidarity rally and march here on Dec. 10 to support striking members of the International Association of Machinists Local 516. This mass-based progressive activity was a rare occurrence for this city of 32,000 in northeastern Wisconsin.

Local 516 members have been striking Manitowoc Cranes since Nov. 15 to stop management from busting their union by making the company an “open shop.” The Dec. 10 march and rally gave the bosses and the rest of Wall Street their answer: “Our union will not be busted!”

Some 3,500 teachers, snow plow drivers, firefighters, steelworkers, boiler-makers, operating engineers, laborers, letter carriers, truck drivers, custodians, nurses, bricklayers, electricians, painters, community members, religious leaders, students, immigrant rights activists and workers of many nationalities from both the public and private sector were there in solidarity, according to the the Wisconsin AFL-CIO, which also sponsored the rally.

“We feel it’s important to be here for solidarity. They stood with us, now it’s our turn to stand with them, and we’re going to continue to be here until the job is done,” said Mahlon Mitchell, president



PHOTO: SUSAN RUGGLES

Many unions and community supporters marched with striking Machinists.

of the Wisconsin Firefighters Association.

At Manitowoc’s municipal baseball field, public and private sector union leaders and community supporters spoke before a sea of labor, community and student supporters, hoisting colorful union banners and signs while wearing their union- and labor-related gear.

Phil Neuenfeldt, president of the Wisconsin AFL-CIO, chaired the rally and began by bringing to the main stage the fighting strikers of Machinists Local 516. Many union representatives announced the monetary contributions from their unions or ad-hoc collections.

Major caravans came from Milwaukee, Madison, the Fox Valley, the Lakeshore



WW PHOTO: BRYAN G. PFEIFER

area, Green Bay and many other locations. The state AFL-CIO, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Union and numerous other unions, community, faith-based and student organizations from across the state had mobilized for the rally.

A blocks-long march to the headquarters of Manitowoc Co., the parent company of Manitowoc Cranes, shut down lanes of Dewey Street. In profound acts of solidarity, members of organizations such as Voces de la Frontera, a Milwaukee-based immigrant rights worker organization; Occupy Milwaukee; the South Central Federation Of Labor; the Wisconsin Bail Out the People Movement; and many others drove hundreds of miles to attend the solidarity rally.

Chanting slogans such as “What’s disgusting? Union busting!” “They say cut back! We say fight back!” and “¡Sí, se puede!” (Yes, we can!) and singing union songs led mostly by women, youth and students, the marchers joined in a moving picket line that swelled to take up all the street lanes in front of company headquarters before heading back to the park.

“It’s a great crowd today, a lot of energy,” said firefighter leader Mitchell. “It just shows you that our spirits are not dead. Everything that’s happened from February in Madison until now, it’s carried over to the entire state. For that mat-

ter, it’s carried across the entire nation. That’s why we’re seeing Occupy Wall Street, why we’re seeing Occupy D.C. And now we’re occupying Manitowoc.

“We came up to Manitowoc because an attack on union workers is an attack on immigrants, an attack on Blacks, Latinos, an attack on everybody,” said Joe Shansky of Voces de la Frontera. “This is an awakening, people have woken up. I’ve never seen such solidarity among our side, people who are working to defend our rights.

“Madison was a trigger for sure. Madison was a great opportunity for all of these people who have been working, many of us for most of our lives, for these different causes to come together and unite,” said Shansky.

*Monday through Friday picket lines are from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday from 6 a.m. to 12 noon. If visiting the picket line, supporters can bring hot beverages such as coffee, cider, snacks, etc. Solidarity messages are also encouraged. For updates, information and how to support Local 516: <http://www.iamlodge516.org>.*

*Bryan G. Pfeifer is an organizer with the Wisconsin Bail Out the People Movement, a labor-community-student organization that is supporting the Machinists Local 516 strike. [www.wibailoutpeople.org](http://www.wibailoutpeople.org)*

## Unions, parents support school bus drivers



PHOTO: KAREN TORRES

PIST parents (in front of banner) stand in solidarity with school bus drivers.

By Sara Catalinotto  
PIST organizer  
New York

Members of the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1181-1061 held a press conference on the steps of City Hall here Dec. 6 to correct Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s false announcement of an impending citywide school bus strike.

The billionaire politician’s attempt to turn parent anger against these workers was beaten back as 60 people — including speakers from Parents to Improve School Transportation (PIST), Class Size Matters and the Coalition for Educational Justice — voiced their support for the union, which is currently in contract negotiations with the city.

Delegations from Teamsters Local 854, who also operate school buses, other Teamster leaders, and two major, militant unions also in contract negotiations with the city — Service Employees Local 32-BJ (building services) and Transport Workers Local 100 (public transit) — also gave

statements. Local elected officials and religious leaders joined in.

ATU Local 1181 president, Michael Cordiello, made it clear that school bus drivers, escorts and mechanics hope to avoid a strike, in the interest of fellow working-class families who depend on their services, but that the city’s wish to “ship out school bus contracts to the cheapest bidder” would lead to unsafe conditions for bus children.

A key issue in the negotiations is job security for qualified, experienced people who transport children of all ages. More than 60,000 of the 150,000 yellow-bus riders in New York are students with disabilities. PIST grandmother Margaret DePaula said, “We want unionized, trained drivers and escorts who know how to handle our special-needs children.”

New Yorkers are urged to call the mayor’s and chancellor’s offices to express support for employee protection provisions in all school transportation contracts. Upcoming ATU 1181-1061 contract rallies will be announced at [pistnyc.org](http://pistnyc.org). □

## Bank greed equals arson Officials let home burn to ground

By Gavrielle Gemma

A mobile home in a rural, working-class area of northwest Tennessee burned to the ground on Dec. 5 after a team of firefighters called to the scene were ordered to let it burn. (MSNBC, Dec. 7)

Officials watched as Vicky Bell, risking her own safety, rushed into the burning trailer to try to save her few possessions. Why? Because county residents are required to pay a \$75 yearly fee for fire protection and Bell, like so many stressed people in this jobless environment, just could not afford it.

The mayor of South Fulton, Tenn., David Crocker, said he let Bell’s home burn to teach others a lesson if they did not pay for fire protection. Last year Gene Cranick’s home was also allowed to burn down when he couldn’t pay the tax.

Hundreds of thousands of urban and rural cities and counties are cutting services, from fire to medical care to children’s school lunches. Their budgets are being devoured by banks that issued bonds to these local governments and now reap huge tax-free profits from the

interest. Rather than cancel payments to the banks, whose vaults are overflowing with money, officials are putting debt service first, before every other expense.

Harold Schaitberger, president of an association representing firefighters, said last year, “Professional, career firefighters shouldn’t be forced to check a list before running out the door to see which homeowners have paid up.”

It’s clear that workers, urban and rural, need to rise up against this deadly dictatorship that the capitalist banks have imposed on us. □



See [www.workers.org/books](http://www.workers.org/books) for the pamphlet ‘WISCONSIN: Lighting the Fires of Class Struggle.’



# OWS vs. fraudulent capitalist democracy

By Fred Goldstein

The police campaign to wipe out the Occupy Wall Street movement across the country should drive home a truth that has long been experienced by oppressed communities, workers on strike, fighters for civil rights, immigrant workers and many others. The regime of capitalist democracy in the United States has a violently repressive character — side-by-side with its controlled “democratic” institutions.

This latest wave of police assaults demonstrates in particular the profound fear among the “1%” of an attempt by any genuine grassroots movement to establish even the most rudimentary network of popular democratic forums outside the framework of the corrupt political system — especially when they are directed against the rich.

In city after city there has been harsh, violent police suppression of Occupy Wall Street sites. Batons, pepper spray, tear gas, rubber bullets, bicycles, horses and helicopters have been used by battalions of cops dispatched by mayors in a nationally coordinated effort to destroy peaceful occupations of public spaces. More than 5,000 people have been arrested and hundreds injured, pepper sprayed or gassed in police assaults.

Tents, sleeping bags, personal belongings, kitchens, medical stations and libraries have all been illegally confiscated and/or destroyed. Even the capitalist media have been put behind barricades and prevented from covering the brutality brought down on occupiers. In the style of the Pentagon during its wars, embedded reporters approved by the city and the cops are sometimes allowed coverage — but from afar and only in the aftermath of the attacks.

## OWS stronger than ever

To be sure, OWS has not been defeated by a long shot. Police repression has failed to halt the movement. In fact, OWS has only expanded, both in the number of active locations and in its many targets.

OWS has invaded housing auctions, protested and stopped foreclosures, defended immigrant workers, engaged in union and strike support, showed the connection between banking and the prison-industrial complex, showed solidarity with the Egyptian revolution, and engaged in many other areas of solidarity. And of course it has continued its campaign against the banks and other symbols of the “1%.”

In places, the OWS movement has re-occupied areas cleared by police. In most places, it has kept General Assemblies (GAs) going. It has camped on streets and met in parks. It holds meetings, workshops, teach-ins, marches, demonstrations and direct action across the country.

But with all the movement’s resiliency, a major political question must not be

lost sight of. Why has this powerful ruling class, with all the force it has available to it — the FBI, Homeland Security, the National Guard, state and local police forces — been seized by a wave of fear when confronted by unarmed, peaceful groups who are doing nothing more than setting up camps in public spaces and discussing politics? Why have the democratic rights of freedom of assembly and freedom of speech been trampled under police boots using the completely manufactured pretext of protecting public health and safety?

## Establishment fears popular democracy

The reason is that the OWS movement burst onto the scene with an indictment of the rich and with the creation of a nucleus for a popular form of grassroots democracy outside the framework of the top-down, completely controlled and orchestrated political system that prevails in the U.S.

The prevailing system has been an unobstructed vehicle for the millionaires and billionaires to completely control the political, economic and social agenda of the country — to pile up trillions of dollars while impoverishing the people, to throw people out of their homes, to lay off workers, to break unions, to set the cops on the oppressed communities, to build the high-school-to-jail pipeline, to super-exploit and deport undocumented workers at will and — above all — to shut an entire generation out of the labor force or condemn them to low-paying, low-skilled jobs without a future.

The OWS movement has declared that enough is enough! The occupations are a rebuttal to the sham of the elections and the two capitalist political parties. The General Assemblies, the open exposures of the domination of the rich 1%, and above all the open invitation to the masses of people to witness or participate in the deliberations, for free, at any time of day, on their lunch hours, before or after work, without any restriction, is a bold challenge to the fraudulent “democracy” rigged up by the millionaires and billionaires who control Congress.

In other words, in addition to trying to stop agitation against the “1%,” which is really shorthand for the rulers of this country, the establishment is afraid of the very form of the protest as much it wants to silence the content. OWS is counterpoising an elementary form of popular democracy to the democracy that serves the rich in this country.

## Lenin on capitalist ‘democracy’

In this connection, it is worthwhile to recall some key passages written by V.I. Lenin, the leader of the world’s first successful socialist revolution, which occurred in October 1917 in Russia.

The revolution was vilified by the world capitalist press from day one. And in 1918, Karl Kautsky, a former socialist leader who turned against the revolution, wrote a slanderous pamphlet attacking the right of the workers and peasants to defend their victory from what amounted to the “1%” of Russia — the capitalists and landlords who had exploited and oppressed the people mercilessly. Kautsky did this in the name of defending “democracy,” without saying democracy for which class: the oppressed who had taken power, or the oppressors who had been ousted?

Lenin, in his pamphlet, “The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky,” described the state under capitalist democracy:

“Take the structure of the state. ... Under bourgeois democracy the capitalists, by thousands of tricks which are the more

artful and effective the more ‘pure’ democracy is developed — drive the people **away** from administrative work, from freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, etc. ... **The working people are barred** from participation in bourgeois parliaments (they **never decide** important questions under bourgeois democracy, which are decided by the stock exchange and the banks) by thousands of obstacles, and the workers know and feel, see and realize perfectly well that the bourgeois parliaments are institutions **alien** to them, **instruments for the oppression** of the workers by the bourgeoisie, institutions of a hostile class, of the exploiting minority.” (Emphases in original.)

Lenin went on to show how under capitalism the rich control the state bureaucracy. They have all the connections and privileges. They own the great buildings and mansions. Freedom of the press is pure hypocrisy because the rich own the printing presses, the publishing houses, the paper supplies.

Wherein is this any different from so-called “democracy” under present-day U.S. capitalism? The bosses own and control radio and television, the newspapers, the magazines and the educational institutions.

They own all the meeting halls, stadiums and even the smallest gathering places. This all costs money — unlike the occupations set up by OWS. No workers ever get to have nightly talk shows on prime-time television, with the right to invite their own guests and to expose the evils inflicted on the people by the rich.

The two capitalist parties are wholly bought and paid for by corporate lobbyists. This can be seen in all the pro-big business legislation passed, year after year. The Congress is notoriously a millionaires’ club.

The workers and the poor are shut out of the electoral process by extreme, obstructive ballot requirements, by lack of

access to publicity, by lack of funds for significant campaign organization. All of this is reserved for the Republicans and Democrats — each serving the rich in the long run, despite their different styles.

Lenin continued: “Take the fundamental laws of modern states, take their administration, take freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, or ‘equality of all citizens before the law,’ and you will see at every turn evidence of the hypocrisy of bourgeois democracy with which every honest and class-conscious worker is familiar. There is not a single state, however democratic, which has no loopholes or reservations in its constitution guaranteeing the bourgeoisie the possibility of dispatching troops against the workers, of proclaiming martial law, and so forth, in case of a ‘violation of public order,’ and actually in case the exploited class ‘violates’ its position of slavery and tries to behave in a non-slavish manner.”

The occupations have been attacked so furiously by the ruling class precisely because they hold the potential to become centers of genuinely popular democracy. They very quickly became magnets of attraction for workers, the unemployed, students and youth who have been shut out by the system. They have already spread to the campuses and have the potential to expand into the oppressed communities, e.g., “Occupy the Hood,” or into factories and working-class neighborhoods.

As such, they have the potential to go far beyond their modest beginnings and beyond what anyone intended or could foresee. In the midst of a gigantic, unsolvable and deepening capitalist economic crisis, the occupations, especially in the giant urban centers, could take on a truly mass character.

The ruling class fears the embryo of a rival authority that is inherent in the form of the General Assembly, open to the masses with the freedom to denounce and expose the rich and the capacity to launch actions that challenge the rule of the “1%” — the capitalist class. □

## Commentary

## On MLK holiday in New York

# ‘Occupy 4 Jobs’ day

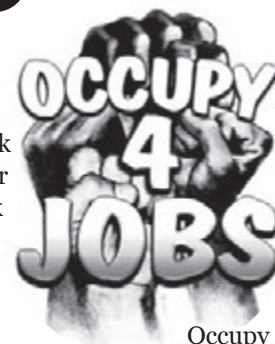
By Brenda Ryan  
New York

The Occupy 4 Jobs network is celebrating Martin Luther King Jr. Day in New York City with a direct action to demand jobs. The Jan. 16 event will begin at 1 p.m. at Union Square.

“The MLK holiday is the perfect day to do this,” said Larry Holmes, a leading organizer of the Bail Out the People Movement, one of the founders of Occupy 4 Jobs. “What most people don’t know is that in the last months of his life, King was devoted to opening a struggle for everyone to have a decent-paying job.”

In early 1968, before his April 4th assassination, King announced the Poor People’s Campaign, which was to culminate in a March on Washington demanding a \$12 billion Economic Bill of Rights. The demands of the campaign were jobs, income and housing. The Economic Bill of Rights guaranteed employment to all and an annual income to those unable to work.

Now, 43 years later, people are in desperate need of jobs. More than 30 million people in the country are unemployed and underemployed, and every



day more workers are losing their jobs. In New York City alone, 500,000 people are officially unemployed; the figure is probably closer to 1 million when including those who are underemployed or no longer counted on the unemployment rolls.

Occupy 4 Jobs was formed at a People’s Assembly in November to demand a massive public works project big enough to provide jobs at union wages for all unemployed and underemployed workers.

Occupy 4 Jobs is also launching a direct action to demand that banks provide money to the community for jobs. Banks are sitting on huge cash reserves and not investing them in job creation. In addition to trillions in bailouts, they also receive tax-exempt bonds from states and cities. The state and city of New York have together given banks \$18 billion in these bonds.

Foreclosures, layoffs, and the slashing and eradication of social services, including food stamps and unemployment benefits, have devastated millions of people. There is an urgent need to reignite the campaign that Dr. King launched to fight for jobs for all at a living wage. All out for Jan. 16! □



www.LowWageCapitalism.org  
www.workers.org/books



# From Detroit to West Coast Struggles push back evictions

By Kris Hamel  
Detroit

The Occupy Wall Street movement in cities across the United States took part in a National Day of Action to Occupy Our Homes on Dec. 6. In announcing the planned day of action, OWS released a statement saying that the movement would “join the struggle of families and communities that have been on the front lines of a struggle for economic justice. We will stand in solidarity and ask our fellow occupations to join us for a national day of action on the foreclosure crisis.” (occupywallst.org, Nov. 23)

Actions took place in at least 25 cities, including Atlanta, Brooklyn, N.Y., Riverside, Calif., and Portland, Ore. They included disruptions of foreclosure auctions; taking over and occupying empty housing; moving foreclosed families back into their homes; protesting outside banks; and rallying in support of homeowners facing foreclosure and eviction.

A victory was won in Detroit when CitiMortgage, getting wind of a protest being organized to stop the eviction of Kyra



Kyra Williams with attorney Vanessa Fluker.

Robert and Debbie Henry vow to resist Bank of America eviction.

WW PHOTOS: KRIS HAMEL



Williams, backed off and agreed to allow Williams to stay in her home. Jerry Goldberg of the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions & Utility Shutoffs told the protesters assembled outside the Williams home on the near east side of Detroit: “Last night at 6:30 the lawyer for the mortgage company called Vanessa Fluker, Williams’ attorney, and said they heard that Occupy Detroit was going to storm the courthouse this morning, so they dismissed the eviction and have agreed in writing to let Wil-

liams purchase the property and stay in her home. We have to keep them to their word because they’ve reneged before. It was the people’s struggle that won this victory.”

Moratorium NOW!, Jobs With Justice and Occupy Detroit organized the demonstration. Speaker after speaker

denounced the banks and mortgage companies and their fraudulent, racist, predatory lending, which has destroyed communities around the country.

Goldberg, Fluker and Steve Babson of the People Before Banks Coalition spoke out against the ongoing “silent bailout” that banks are receiving from the federal government, which is the number one foreclosing entity in the country. Mortgage loans owned or backed by government-owned Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and the Federal Housing Authority comprise 75 percent of mortgages in the U.S. today. Lenders are paid the full value of the inflated loans while homeowners are tossed out into the street.

Activists earlier held a support rally outside the home of Debbie Henry and Robert Henry of Southgate, Mich., a downriver Detroit suburb. The couple have vowed to resist eviction by Bank of America and Fannie Mae. Activists will stand with and assist the family on Jan. 2 to stop the eviction.

For more information on these struggles, visit [www.moratorium-mi.org](http://www.moratorium-mi.org). □

# Occupy movement, workers

Continued from page 1

the Port of Oakland to shut it down. The main two terminals scheduled for day-shift work were closed and the longshore workers sent home by 10:30 a.m.

Later in the day, coordinated marches from Oscar Grant Plaza in downtown Oakland and the West Oakland BART brought out about 20,000 demonstrators, who quickly and effectively shut down the port. By 6 p.m., all longshore workers were being sent home, and the port was closed tighter than a drum.

The afternoon rally in Oakland featured fiery speeches directly targeting capitalism. Speakers pointed out how sexism, racism and anti-gay bigotry are all spawned by capitalist oppression and how it is the exploitation of labor that is the source of capitalist profits.

Scott Olsen, the Iraq war veteran who sustained a serious head injury during the October police attack on Occupy Oakland, addressed the crowd and announced he was again marching with Occupy Oakland.

After shutting down two shifts, Occupy Oakland activists remained at the port to continue the protest in response to police attacks in San Diego, Seattle, Houston and other cities. Pickets were established at two port terminals prior to the 3:00 a.m. shift, which then was also cancelled, effectively shutting down the Oakland Port for 24 hours.

Similar demonstrations were held up and down the West Coast, some aimed to shut down port terminals, others as informational solidarity demonstrations.

In **Longview**, Wash., where EGT is attempting to split up the ILWU coast-wide grain terminal contract, the port was shut down with the help of supporters from Portland and Seattle. Dan Coffman, president of ILWU Local 21 in Longview,



Port of Oakland.

WW PHOTOS: BILL BOWERS

In **Portland**, Ore., some 500 people, including rank-and-file ILWU members, shut down the port entirely on the morning and evening shifts. The port arbitrator ruled for the ILWU, so the longshore workers were paid for four hours and sent home.

Occupy L.A. and Occupy supporters from the **central coast** of California successfully slowed operations at the Port of Long Beach and Port of Hueneme, respectively.

The **Long Beach** march started at Harry Bridges Park, named for the leader of the 1934 San Francisco general strike that won a unified longshore union and smashed racist divisions on the docks.

Hundreds came — some media said 1,000 — to defend the right of truckers, mostly Latino/a drivers, to unionize, as well as in recognition of the ILWU in Longview, Wash., and the right of the Occupy Wall Street movement to continue without police repression and violence.

Twenty-six Los Angeles truckers had been fired at Toll Group when they wore Teamster union jackets to work, sparking the call for the Dec. 12 shutdown. Gold-

man Sachs financial empire owns 51 percent of anti-union SSA Marine.

Marchers filled the entrance to the ILWU parking lot before the 7 a.m. start time. They came from Pasadena, Long Beach, Los Angeles and other areas with OWS activism — 55 from Riverside, Calif., alone — including Teamsters in their jackets and a hunger striker from San Diego in a wheelchair.

Occupy4Jobs.org signs read: “Bust Goldman Sachs, not our unions.” The back-up of cars grew, waited and then turned around, but still no trucks. Many police in a line pushed with batons against a wall of people determined to stop business as usual for capitalism for as long as they could on this day.

More police came, not only from Long Beach but from Los Angeles, and the highway patrol. One man was thrown to the ground and arrested, his head bleeding. But the occupation of the road continued. Trucks were lined up, unable to enter. A tent was pitched in the roadway. By 10 a.m. the marchers were back in Harry Bridges Park, but trucks were backed up to the freeway and the ILWU

thanked the Occupy rally by phone: “Without you this wouldn’t have been possible. You inspire us to keep on fighting. The ILWU is part of the 99 percent. You have the sleeping giant on [its] feet. ... This is the rebirth of the labor movement.”

Some 1,000 demonstrators in **Seattle** marched from downtown to the port there and were able to completely shut down the night shift at two terminals. The police attacked with tear gas and percussion grenades. One protester was pepper-sprayed directly in the face, and a number were arrested. Occupy Seattle decided to close down the night shift, rather than the day shift, so that the port truckers, who are mainly unorganized Africans and South Asians, would not be penalized.



‘Occupy Philly is watching’

# Mic check supports nursing home workers

Chanting “Union-busting is disgusting!” Occupy Philly activists barged into the headquarters lobby of Presby’s Inspired Life, a local nursing home chain, on Dec. 9. In front of surprised managers, including President/CEO Judee M. Bavaria, who raked in more than \$400,000 in total compensation in 2009, activists yelled in unison from the mic-check script:

“Mic check! We are Occupy Philly. We have a message for Presby’s Inspired Life. ... Every moment that you spend money on union-busting lawyers instead of investing in patient care and a quality workforce, Occupy Philly is watching. ... Every moment these workers are targeted and fired, Occupy Philly is watching. ... If Presby’s Inspired Life refuses to address these problems, we’ll be back!”

The five-minute action took place to support nursing home workers — many are immigrants — who overwhelmingly voted to be represented by SEIU Healthcare PA in April 2010. PIL has refused to negotiate a fair contract, however.

PIL provides care to 2,600 residents in 25 communities through the work of



nearly 1,100 employees in the Philadelphia area. When the contract demands of 140 workers at the Broomall Presbyterian

Village are finally met, that would set the stage to unionize and raise the working conditions of all PIL workers.

Workers are threatening to strike if the negotiation deadlock continues.

— Report and photo by Joe Piette

# shut ports



WW PHOTO: JUDY GREENSPAN

parking lot was empty.

In **Houston**, a group of demonstrators were held face down, handcuffed, while cops brazenly placed a tent over them, preventing onlookers from witnessing what was being done. Houston cops covered their badge numbers with duct tape before arresting 20 or 25 of the protesters.

Occupy **Denver** gathered at the Wal-Mart Distribution Center in Loveland, Colo. Several people sat in front of the chain’s trucks to form a blockade, linking arms, and were dragged away and arrested. There were 13 arrests in all — a few just for jaywalking/crossing the street, others

for the blockade/resisting arrest.

In **New York**, a spirited march in solidarity with the port actions went from Zuccotti Park to several sites around the Wall Street area owned by Goldman Sachs. At 10 a.m. around 200 OWS activists went inside Winter Garden, a Goldman Sachs-owned mall, and began holding a rowdy demonstration. The police responded with violence, and there were more than 20 arrests. The usually busy mall was closed for several hours.

In **Japan**, the International Labor Solidarity Committee of Doro-Chiba held a solidarity protest against Itochu, an af-

filiate of EGT which is trying to bust the ILWU in Longview.

This historic day was the result of a coordinated effort among the many Occupy movements in port cities along the West Coast. It arose partially in response to the police repression against Occupy encampments across the country. These brutal attacks against Occupy sites were overseen by the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI.

The federally coordinated attack against Occupy Oakland on Oct. 25 was followed by police attacks against Occupy encampments in other locations, includ-

ing the eviction of the initial OWS from Zuccotti Park in New York. But instead of crushing the movement, this vicious repression has only made it grow.

The movement of cargo was halted or disrupted along the entire West Coast. Today’s coordinated actions demonstrated to the 1% who rule this country that the Occupy movement is here to stay, and will continue to fight for economic justice for the 99% and against police repression.

Contributors to this article include Judy Greenspan, Paul Teitelbaum, Terri Kay, Jim McMahan, Dave Welsh, Cheryl LaBash and Caleb T. Maupin.



# Syrian opposition leader lines up with Washington

By John Catalinotto

As of Dec. 12, the U.S. and/or NATO forces have not bombed or invaded Syria, as they have done to Afghanistan, Iraq and most recently Libya. The existence of a Russian naval base in Tartus on Syria's Mediterranean coast and the refusal of Russia and China to allow the U.N. Security Council to permit such a military intervention has at least postponed it.

Washington and the European Union's intervention in Syria's internal political crisis has thus concentrated on political, propaganda and economic attacks on the Bashir al-Assad government. In addition, NATO member Turkey has given a safe haven to an armed opposition. The Western imperialist powers have also stepped up their efforts to build up the Syrian opposition leaders most closely aligned with and beholden to them.

Uprisings in North Africa and Western Asia have disrupted the close control the imperialist powers have had over the region. They have deposed client dictators Hosni Mubarak in Egypt and Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia and threaten to push out the president of Yemen. Washington has reacted in Egypt and Tunisia by supporting military rule in place of the former dictators, even as it fully supports reactionary regimes in Saudi Arabia and Gulf states like Bahrain.

In Moammar Gadhafi's Libya, NATO used a ragtag reactionary opposition to depose a regime that was on Washington's hit list for decades, as Syria's government has been.

In Marxist class terms, the Gadhafi and al-Assad governments, like the Iranian government and the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq before the U.S. occupation, can be described as bourgeois nationalist. That is, they are capitalist states whose business class exploits the workers, but which come into conflict with the dominant imperialist powers in the world.

## Clinton meets with Syrian 'National Council'

On Dec. 6, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met with seven leaders of the "Syrian National Council" in Geneva, Switzerland. This occurred just after the State Department announced it was sending the U.S. ambassador, who was withdrawn some months ago, back to Syria. These were signs of the U.S. stepping up its interference.

According to Bloomberg News, Dec. 6, "A State Department official present at the meeting said the U.S. considers the council to be a leading and legitimate representative of Syrians seeking a peaceful, democratic transition." Speaking off the record, he said that "Clinton expressed hope that al-Assad would see merit in leaving. ..." Clinton advised the SNC leaders to unite all the opposition, according to this official.

The Wall Street Journal on Dec. 2 published a long interview with the president of the SNC, Burhan Ghalioun. In it, Ghalioun revealed the SNC's willingness to make concessions to the imperialist countries and their local agent, the Israeli state, especially regarding the Golan Heights and

relations with Iran and Hezbollah.

Ghalioun told the WSJ, "We asked for economic sanctions; we asked for coordination between the Arab League, the E.U., Turkey and the West. ... We asked them to send a message to the regime with warnings that there is no way out. We asked to apply pressure on Russia and China."

He claimed the SNC's goal is to protect civilians. This was the alleged goal also in Libya, which NATO quickly turned into a go-ahead to bomb whatever Libyan targets it wanted to bomb.

Ghalioun also called the current close relationship between Syria and Iran "abnormal. It is unprecedented in Syria's foreign policy history. ... There will be no special relationship with Iran. ... Breaking the exceptional relationship means breaking the strategic military alliance."

Ghalioun added, "As our relations with Iran change, so too will our relationship with Hezbollah. Hezbollah after the fall of the Syrian regime will not be the same."

Ghalioun said regarding Golan that they will focus on negotiations and that "we are banking on our special relationship with the Europeans and Western powers in helping us in reclaiming the Golan as fast as possible."

About the U.S., he said, "They are participating in creating Western, European, Arab and Turkish public opinion. I believe they are choosing a back seat strategy of cooperation. This is a good strategy."

In other words, Ghalioun is trying to convince the Western powers that a SNC government would be their ally against Iran and Hezbollah and would be concil-

iatory toward Israel. He also is advising Washington to support them, but not too openly.

Besides the SNC, a "Syrian Liberation Army" is carrying out armed actions inside Syria. Turkey provides the SLA logistical support. Ghalioun implied that the SNC supported the SLA but did not control its actions.

## Left critics of al-Assad government

Other Syrian groups critical of the al-Assad government reject any imperialist intervention. In Damascus on Dec. 3, the secretary of the National Committee for the Unity of Syrian Communists, Dr. Qadri Jamil, announced at a news conference "the formation of Pioneering Revolutionist Party that would combine communists and leftists in the country." (News-DP, Dec. 4)

Jamil said that Syria needs the immediate formation of a national unity government that comprises representatives from the ruling party and the opposition "on the basis of consensus to defend the homeland and national unity. Measures are needed to protect national unity, exterminate the armed terrorist group, turn toward a democratic economic and social program and start comprehensive national dialogue."

Others at the conference included the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party. It is unclear what influence these groups have within the opposition. □

# Top secret U.S. drone downed in Iran

By Gene Clancy

U.S. imperialism has been dealt a serious blow by the downing of a supersecret spy drone in Iran.

The Iranians brought down the drone 140 miles inside their territory from the Afghan border. Iran's government announced on Dec. 11 that its defense forces had downed the aircraft through a sophisticated cyberattack.

This is the first time the Pentagon has lost a drone this way.

Initially, officials in Washington denied that Iran had detected and downed the drone, but they later admitted that they had lost it. White House officials first claimed that the drone was nothing special and belonged to the NATO-led

"International Security Assistance Force" in Afghanistan. Later, they admitted that the pilotless surveillance plane was a stealth aircraft that the CIA was using for top-secret missions.

The U.S. officials first tried to convince the world that it was no special problem that the aircraft and its systems were exposed to Iran. Later, they admitted that the aircraft is so important for the U.S. that they had worked out scenarios for three possible operations to retrieve or destroy it. Ultimately, a U.S. official said they concluded that such a secret opera-



Captured U.S. drone on display in Iran.

tion wasn't worth the risk of provoking a more explosive clash with Tehran. (Wall Street Journal, Dec. 8)

Recently, the U.S. and/or Israel have conducted a number of attacks against Iran. These include the assassination of four nuclear scientists, the issuance of a phony report by the International Atomic Energy Agency by a director friendly to the U.S., the filing of preposterous charges against Iran of a bizarre and amateurish plot to assassinate the Saudi ambassador to the U.S., and the imposition of trade sanctions.

Iran's leaders point to the drone as further evidence of hostile U.S. intentions and have lodged a formal diplomatic protest over the violation of Iranian airspace.

Pentagon officials have identified the missing drone as an RQ-170 Sentinel, an unarmed, bat-winged aircraft used by the CIA. This drone, equipped with cameras and other sensor equipment to monitor activity on the ground, can linger undetected for hours at 50,000 feet, far higher than many aircraft. An RQ-170 was used to gather intelligence to prepare the raid that killed Osama bin Laden in May, a raid that violated Pakistan's sovereignty.

The drone's downing not only exposes U.S. aggression but also demonstrates that the Western powers and Israel no longer have a monopoly on advanced cyber technology. Iranian leaders say that both China's and Russia's governments have asked to see the captured drone.

It is important for progressive people everywhere to expose and resist all imperialist plans to launch a war against Iran. □

# Artie Rosen's comrades remember

Speakers talked about how Artie Rosen always wore a Free Palestine! button on his cap. How he got Workers World newspaper out to newsstands and bookstores for more than 50 years. How he made friends among workers everywhere, from the subway platform where he handed newspapers to train operators and conductors, to the post office where each week he delivered bundles of WWs for shipping across the country, to the hospital where nurses and aides warmed to his smile.

The memorial to Artie Rosen, held at the Solidarity Center in New York on Dec. 4, was packed with his comrades of



PVN PHOTO: SUE HARRIS

many years and with younger members of Workers World Party who learned about his life and times: how imperialist wars and atrocities had convinced this young Jewish worker to become a life-long communist and a fighter for the rights of all

oppressed peoples. An obituary appeared in Workers World on Nov. 27.

The program ended with a number of speakers leading the singing of "The Internationale," pictured here.

— Deirdre Griswold



# Tijuana conference on worker unity

**Special to Workers World**  
**Tijuana, Mexico**

Leaders of working-class movements in Latin America and the United States met here Dec. 2-4 on the theme of “Working Class Unity and Continental Integration.” Delegates came from Cuba, Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay, Puerto Rico and the U.S.

The event started on an upbeat note even before the first talk. As people gathered, live video coverage was showing the historic founding conference of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. This organization is an alternative to the Organization of American States, which Washington initiated in 1948 and which is headquartered in Washington. Until 2009, the OAS excluded Cuba. CELAC includes every country of the Western Hemisphere except the U.S. and its junior partner, Canada.

The resurgence of the workers’ struggle around the world — including within the U.S. with the Occupy movement — infused this eighth annual Tijuana conference with optimism.

The program began by awarding diplomas to those delegates who had just attended three days of classes led by the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC), the World Federation of Trade Unions, the Union of Mexican Electrical Workers (SME), Unión del Barrio and the International Action Center. Anibal Melo of the CTC, an instructor, handed the graduates their diplomas.

Juan Castillo of Uruguay, general coordinator of the Trade Union Encounter for Our America (ESNA), gave opening remarks. Then National Miners Union Section 65 secretary-general, Sergio Tolano Lizarraga, described the struggle of copper miners in Cananea in the Mexican

state of Sonora. They have been on strike since July 2007, initially over health and safety issues. “We don’t struggle begging and crawling like worms,” said Tolano. “The miners are very proud.”

Ignacio Meneses, coordinator of the Labor Exchange, which sponsored the conference along with the WFTU, the IAC and Unión del Barrio, opened the first panel observing: “We have a time of integration with ALBA [the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas], CELAC, ESNA and WFTU.”

Raymundo Navarro, a member of the Secretariat of the CTC, explained the challenges facing Cuba. While prices for the country’s chief exports, sugar and nickel, have plummeted, the cost of Cuba’s main imports, food and fuel, have gone up. In addition, the number of young people in the work force has fallen while the country has a growing number of retirees.

Why? The liberation of women in revolutionary Cuba has allowed women to opt for fewer children. At the same time, Cuba has raised life expectancy to almost 80 years for women and 78 for men. Now, “Wealth is shared faster than it is being created.” Cuba must raise productivity so no one is left out in the cold.

João Batista, director of international relations of the Confederation of Brazilian Workers (CTB) and technical secretary for ESNA, began with the premise that the systemic crisis of capitalism has no exit. There are 200 million unemployed in the world. Just to go back to pre-recession levels of unemployment would require the creation of 80 million new jobs.

Citing 16 recent general strikes in Greece, the Occupy movement in the U.S. and the “relative decline of U.S. imperialism,” Batista said, “The world is in transition.”

In Brazil, the CTB supported the government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva because Lula confronted neoliberalism and strengthened the internal economy. The CTB supports Lula’s successor, Dilma Rousseff, but sees Brazil’s dependence on international finance capital as a contradiction.

The CTB is one of six labor federations in Brazil. They recently all joined with social movements in “a conference of the working class.” Their common program includes increased internal development, redistribution of income, higher wages, agrarian reform and a shorter workweek with no cut in pay.

Humberto Montes de Oca, external secretary of SME, described the situation in Mexico. The U.S. government’s “Operation Fast and Furious,” purportedly to combat drug trafficking, has left 55,000 dead over five years. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of workers have been fired under the anti-union government of President Felipe Calderón.

Mexico has 55 million people officially living in poverty. For two years, since Calderón decided to privatize the state-owned electric company and fire the workers, SME has been fighting capitalism. The government made an offer to re-employ union members in small enterprises and cooperatives. “This would

fragment our collective identity,” said Montes de Oca. “Our general assembly met yesterday and we told them to go to hell.” SME is part of a resurgence in which the class struggle has been reactivated worldwide.

Martha Grevatt, an autoworker and union activist from Detroit, spoke on the economic crisis in the U.S., where the official figure of 9 percent unemployment does not show the true extent of suffering. That figure, she noted, does not include discouraged workers or young workers who have never had a job. It does not include people in prison or those who have joined the military due to lack of civilian jobs, the underemployed, the “working poor” or undocumented workers. “The working class of the U.S., like that of the rest of the world,” said Grevatt, “has only two choices: class struggle or suicide.”

This panel set the tone for the entire conference, which was decidedly pro-socialist. “For us, what comes first,” Navarro explained, “is to consolidate our socialism so that the flame that we lit will stay alive and burning so that other countries can pick up the torch.” Batista held up Cuba as the model and said, “There are new possibilities for the struggle for socialism in our country and the rest of the world.” □

**FREE THE  
CUBAN 5  
unjustly held  
in U.S. prisons  
for more than  
13 years**



Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, Ramón Labañino Salazar, Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez and Fernando González Llort. René González Sehwerert, while recently released, is still being forced to remain in the U.S. against his will.

# Euro summit intensifies capitalist crisis

**By Fred Goldstein**

The primary development at the Brussels summit meeting of European leaders was that the German capitalist government, headed by Angela Merkel, punched more holes in the sinking ship of European capitalism while attempting to throw away the life preserver.

The German proposal to “hard-wire” austerity into the European Union triumphed. At the same time, the German capitalist government ruled out allowing the European Central Bank to take on the same role as the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank, that is, to become the lender of last resort to buy bonds from failing indebted governments.

The European leaders in Brussels failed miserably in their efforts to resolve the financial crisis in Europe. That is because they are laboring under the illusion that the financial crisis can be separated from the global capitalist crisis.

The world crisis of overproduction, the inability of capitalism to grow its way out of the crisis, the steady slowdown of the world economy and the relentless rise of mass unemployment cannot be resolved by negotiation between capitalist governments or financial authorities. These negative developments arose because capitalism has reached a dead end.

The U.S. bankers, the big monopolies, the Obama administration and many capitalists in Europe wanted to emphasize the bailouts. U.S. financial institutions have several trillion dollars directly or

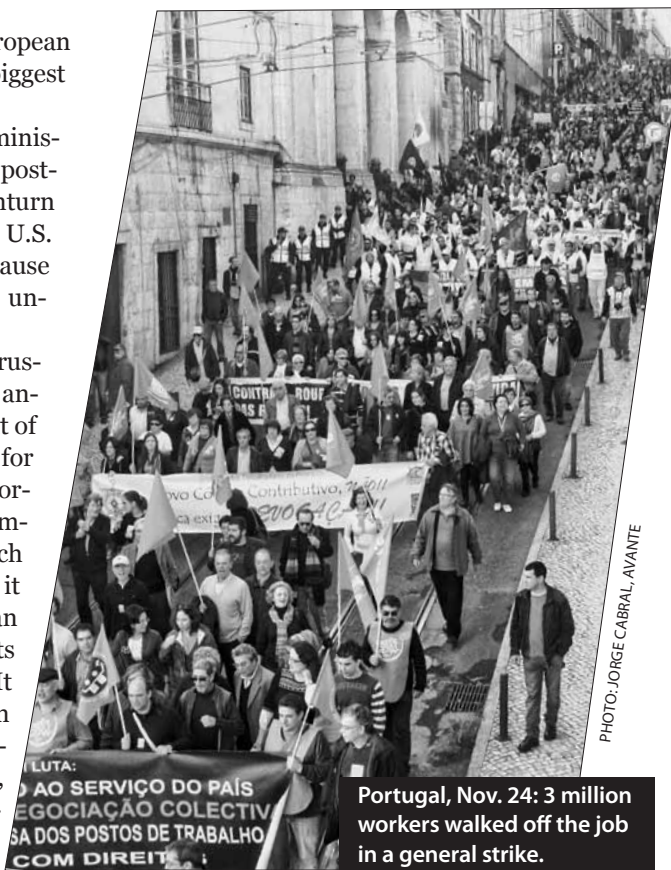
indirectly invested in European banks. Europe is also the biggest export market for the U.S.

Also, the Obama administration wants to at least postpone any economic downturn in Europe until after the U.S. presidential election, because a downturn will increase unemployment here.

The agreement at the Brussels summit imposes an annual debt limit of 3 percent of Gross Domestic Product for each country. Most importantly, the European Commission can examine each national budget before it goes to parliament and can call for changes if the cuts are not austere enough. It can impose sanctions on countries that fail to comply. This means, of course, the poorer, weaker capitalist countries.

The nature of the so-called “sovereign debt crisis” is that the bankers and investors of the world created a government bond bubble by pushing government bond sales on the governments. In fact, Goldman Sachs is being investigated by the Greek government for its role in engineering part of the Greek debt crisis.

Government lending and bond sales account for a huge portion of easy profits for banks. In noncrisis economic times,



a steady stream of fees and interest payments flows into the vaults of the financial sharks. Now that there is an economic crisis, tax revenues have fallen, treasuries have been used to bail out failing banks and the bond bubble has burst, just the way the housing bubble burst in the U.S. The investors want every government’s first priority to be paying interest on previous loans.

Both sides of the argument come from

the perspective of the ruling classes. Both are for austerity. But one side wants to couple austerity with guaranteed bailouts. Neither side worries about the workers, only about guaranteeing the returns to millionaire and billionaire investors and bankers — at the expense of the working class.

The first working-class response to the Brussels summit came in Italy, as the three main labor federations — CGIL, UIL and CISL — went ahead with a three-hour national strike on Dec. 12, the first time in six years that the three had united for a joint strike. The FIOM metalworkers’ union, including many auto workers, went on an eight-hour strike. The transport workers are due to walk out on Dec. 15 and civil service workers the following Monday, Dec. 19.

These strikes are part of a week of nationwide strikes called to protest the austerity plan decreed by new Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti, who announced new sales taxes, cuts in pensions and a rise in the retirement age prior to the summit meeting. The announcement was supposed to give assurances to investors that Italy could pay its debt, but instead it has only spurred the Italian working class into action.

Hopefully, the entire European working class will unite to push back this latest assault by the capitalists of Europe and the U.S. This also sets an example for the workers here, who are suffering from austerity imposed by every level of government — federal, state and city. □



# An attack on young women

If anybody was unconvinced that the Democratic and Republican parties are two sides of the same coin, the recent blockage of over-the-counter emergency contraception by the Obama administration should put such fantasies to rest.

On Dec. 7, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services overruled a decision by the Food and Drug Administration that would have made the “morning-after” pill available to women of all ages without a prescription — the first time, according to the Dec. 8 New York Times, that the HHS has ever overturned an FDA decision. In doing so, the Obama administration follows the “politics first, science second” policies of the Bush administration — policies that the Obama administration vowed to discontinue when it came into office.

Access to emergency contraception for women of all ages has been supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine. In a statement regarding the rejection of FDA approval, FDA head Dr. Margaret Hamburg went on the record with her support for emergency contraception access: “I reviewed and thoughtfully considered the data, clinical information, and analysis provided by the Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, and I agree with the Center that there is adequate and reasonable, well-supported, and science-based evidence that Plan B One-Step is safe and effective and should be approved for nonprescrip-

tion use for all females of child-bearing potential.” (RH Reality Check, Dec. 7) Overruling the FDA is an outright attack on women’s bodies and women’s lives, particularly the lives of teenage girls. Cecile Richards, president of Planned Parenthood, says, “In a country where nearly half of all pregnancies are unplanned, effective birth control isn’t just a convenience — it’s an urgent health need that too many women are still unable to meet.” (Huffington Post, Dec. 9) The underpinning of the argument against emergency contraception for young women is that it will somehow encourage sexual activity. Instead, prevention of access to EC only means a lack of choices for young women who are already having sex. Currently, EC can be purchased by women 17 or older without a prescription, but they must request it at the pharmacy counter. It should be taken within 72 hours of contraceptive failure or unprotected sex. Overruling the FDA and continuing to require teens under 17 to get a prescription means they first need a medical appointment, making it difficult if not impossible for them to obtain EC in time for it to be effective. What kind of choice is that?

The lives of women aren’t any more sacred to the Democrats than they are to the Republicans. Both parties find them expendable when it comes to playing politics, to getting the most election-year contributions, to attempting to put forward the policies that will garner the most votes. The only thing that’s ever won women their rights is the struggle.

## From California prisoners Core demands for the movement

*California prison hunger strikers at Corcoran SHU have drafted a set of 10 core demands that they are proposing be adopted by the Occupy Wall Street Movement. These demands, plus much motivating and enlightening information, were published on Dec. 6 in the San Francisco Bay View, a national Black newspaper. We reprint below the essence of these demands.*

1. We want full employment with a living wage for all people who will work, and for employment to be enforced as the right which it is.
2. We want an end to institutional racism and race- and class-based disparities in access to, and quality of, labor, education, health care, criminal defense, political empowerment, technology and healthy food.
3. We want decent and affordable housing for all people and for it to be enforced as the right which it is.
4. We want affordable and equal access to higher education for all and access to education that teaches the true history of colonialism, chattel slavery, repression of organized labor, the use of police repression and imprisonment as tools of capitalist exploitation, and the perpetuation of imperialism in the development and maintenance of modern U.S. power systems and corporate financial markets.
5. We want an immediate end to police brutality and the murder of oppressed people in the U.S., particularly in the New Afrikan (Black), Latino/a, immigrant and underclass communities and among those protesting in this nation. We recognize the police and other state

- paramilitary agencies — sheriffs, FBI, correctional guards etc. — are, and have always been, the enforcement army of the ruling 1 percent.
6. We want an end to the expansion of the prison industrial complex, as a profit base — from our tax dollars — for the disposal of surplus labor and the poor. The disproportionate distribution of wealth, privilege and opportunity in a society is the origin of all crime. The U.S. has one of the greatest disparities between haves and have nots on earth.
  7. We want an end to all corporate and financial influences in the political process in the U.S.
  8. We want an end to imperialist wars of aggression and sending our youth off to kill and die to enforce the economic interests of big oil and other corporate concerns seeking new resources to exploit, new markets to open for sale of their goods and services and as an impetus to keep from addressing domestic ills.
  9. We want a bottoms-up approach to economic development and labor-capital relations in the U.S. Socio-economic and political policy must now uplift the quality of life from the bottom rung up — empowering the disenfranchised, providing opportunities for those with no options and directing bailouts and subsidies to the people, not banks and billionaires.
  10. We want a more equitable distribution of wealth, justice and opportunity at every level of society, reflecting the objective reality that it’s the socio-economic, political, intellectual and cultural contributions of the 99 percent upon which this society stands. □

## AFRICA 2011

### Outside Durban conference

# ‘People’s Space’ blames climate change on capitalism

By Abayomi Azikiwe  
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

A very important conference on climate change took place in Durban, South Africa, during early December. COP 17 was sponsored by the United Nations and was billed as an event that would bring all states and regions together to hammer out a new agreement for limiting the rapid pace of global warming, which many cite as the cause of the escalating problems of natural disasters, droughts and mounting food deficits.

It was announced on Dec. 11 that a new agreement had been reached, but that it would not be clearly spelled out until 2015 and not implemented until 2020. This outcome of the Durban conference was almost predictable, considering the conflicting interests of the industrialized capitalist states and the newly emerging economies of China, India and Brazil, among others.

Generally not covered about Durban were the mass mobilizations led by trade unionists, community activists and youth who held a “countersummit” in what was called a “People’s Space” on the hill at KwaZulu-Natal University. It was from here that a Global Action Day demonstration was organized, which marched to the COP 17 Conference with a grassroots agenda related to the social concerns of

working people and the oppressed. The People’s Space took up the question of mass unemployment and related it to the need to save the environment. A large number of youth with university educations attended in an effort to get a clearer understanding of why they have been rendered jobless or with low-wage employment.

According to Mike Loewe, writing for Reporting Development Network Africa about the atmosphere prevailing in discussions outside the official COP 17 deliberations: “The issue of climate change is in the air that moves the room. It links everyone and everything. Nobody is allowed to get into their technical box; this is about capitalist psychos, that one percent of greedy, corporate polluters who lord it over the 99 percent, who lobby and bully to prevent any deviation from them keeping their hands on that filthy lucre.” (allafrica.com, Dec. 4)

The conclusion of the People’s Space discussions was that the transnational corporations and the Western capitalist states are to blame for the destruction of the environment and its consequent social impact. Lowe says the activists have noted that “until the masses of people — that 99 percent of humanity — rise up and demand at least 1 million climate-change jobs, the corporates will simply carry on.”

The Durban conference once again raised the issue of creating a fund of billions of dollars to assist the developing countries to work toward cleaner energy sources. However, no firm targets were established.

#### Impact of climate change on Africa

In East Africa, drought has created famine in Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia. These food deficits have escalated tensions inside all these countries and prompted a Kenyan and Ethiopian invasion of Somalia that is supported by the

### Correction

A photo accompanying the article, “Solidarity of labor above all else,” which appeared in the Dec. 15 print edition of Workers World, was misidentified as portraying Leo Robinson, a longshore worker interviewed in the article. The person in the photo is actually Ken Riley, president of International Longshoremen’s Association Local 1422. □

### TOP TEN

## Ways Santa Claus could help during the holidays

1. Recognize the elves’ union and give them a raise so they won’t have to go on strike.
2. Give the reindeer a break by making banker CEOs pull the sleigh and don’t spare the whip ...
3. ... and let Rudolph drive the sleigh this year (he really hates banker CEOs).
4. Since kids send millions of letters to Santa via the post office, put “Save Jobs, Keep the Post Offices Open!” flyers in every kid’s stocking ...
5. ... and tell them they won’t be considered naughty if they occupy the post offices to support the postal workers.
6. Give a one-way sleigh ride home to every U.S. soldier in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Persian Gulf, South Korea and most other countries.
7. For a change, let the elves decide who’s been naughty and who’s been nice — including deciding if you should still be Santa.
8. Let the elves sneak into the Wall Street offices and take back all those million-dollar bonuses and stock options ...
9. ... and use it to buy food, clothing and toys for children all over the world whose parents have been robbed by Wall Street.
10. Last, but not least, deliver a real “Get Out of Jail Free” card to Mumia Abu-Jamal.

— Paul Wilcox





## Stern, Marx and the workers

# Why China has planning but the U.S. doesn't

United States, France and Israel.

In West Africa, trees are dying due to lack of rainfall. This impacts water resources, agriculture, food production and distribution. One of the hardest hit areas is the Sahel, which was the focus of a recent study to be published on Dec. 16 in the Journal of Arid Environments. Patrick Gonzalez, lead author of the study, says: "Rainfall in the Sahel has dropped 20-30 percent in the 20th century, the world's most severe long-term drought since measurements from rainfall gauges began in the mid-1800s. Previous research already established climate change as the primary cause of the drought, which has overwhelmed the resilience of the trees." (eurekalert.org, Dec. 12)

In this region, people need trees for their very survival. Gonzalez notes, "Trees provide people with food, firewood, building materials and medicine."

Gonzalez also points out, "We in the U.S. and other industrialized nations have it in our power, with current technologies and practices, to avert more drastic impacts around the world by reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. Our local actions can have global consequences."

Africa's climate change negotiator at Durban, Tosi Mpanu-Mpanu, stressed, "We don't want Durban to be the graveyard of the Kyoto Protocol," an agreement setting standards for the reduction of pollutants that was rejected by the U.S. "One billion Africans are suffering from the climate change phenomenon, to which they did not contribute." (ethjournal.com, Dec. 9)

Yet the conference in Durban created a separate agreement that will allow the Kyoto Protocol to expire in 2012. The problems associated with climate change can only be addressed through mass political actions that hold the corporations and governments accountable.

The first climate change observatory is scheduled to open in 2014 in Cape Town, South Africa. The observatory will monitor and "present complex information about global climate change in a relevant, accessible and understandable manner." (esi-africa.com, Dec. 12)

People in Africa are very concerned about climate change and are willing to take action. Nighat Amin, vice-president of the International Polar Foundation, which educates the public on polar science and research, says, "There is a willingness here to actually do something about climate change. In other parts of the world there were vested interests, but in South Africa we found that people want to get involved." □

By Deirdre Griswold

Andy Stern, former head of the giant Service Employees union in the United States, recently visited China as part of a delegation organized by the China-United States Exchange Foundation and the Center for American Progress. Stern, knowing very well that U.S. workers are in the midst of a long-term crisis of unemployment that shows no letup, was highly impressed with the goals of China's 12th five-year plan, which were explained to the visiting group by high-ranking Chinese officials.

As he wrote in an op-ed column published Dec. 1 in no less than the Wall Street Journal, entitled "China's Superior Economic Model," China is aiming for "a 7 percent annual economic growth rate; a \$640 billion investment in renewable energy; construction of 6 million homes; and expanding next-generation IT [information technology], clean-energy vehicles, biotechnology, high-end manufacturing and environmental protection — all while promoting social equity and rural development."

Stern did not scoff at these projections, nor did the pre-eminent newspaper of U.S. capitalism add any skeptical words. They both know from experience that China does not fall below its growth projections. On the contrary, it often exceeds them. Meanwhile, the capitalist world is reeling from crisis to crisis.

Stern said, "Our delegation witnessed China's people-oriented development in Chongqing, a city of 32 million in Western China, which is led by an aggressive and popular Communist Party leader — Bo Xilai. A skyline of cranes are building roughly 1.5 million square feet of usable floor space daily — including, our delegation was told, 700,000 units of public housing annually. Meanwhile, the Chinese government can boast that it has established in Western China an economic zone for cloud computing and automotive and aerospace production resulting in 12.5 percent annual growth and 49 percent growth in annual tax revenue, with wages rising more than 10 percent a year."

Stern knows how difficult it is for U.S. unions to negotiate even a 1 percent raise in the present economic environment. And he knows how every public service and program is being cut back right now.

Stern quotes from Intel chairperson Andy Grove, a big U.S. capitalist, and Asia Society head Orville Schell, a leading bourgeois intellectual, to argue that the "free-market model" so highly touted

for years in this country needs "modification." Finally he puts forward his own proposal: "America needs to embrace a plan for growth and innovation, with a streamlined government as a partner with the private sector."

Lack of planning, he says, is the reason the U.S. is falling behind.

Stern's relationship to China is better than that of some other U.S. union officials. For instance, the Steelworkers Union has joined the State Department in demanding trade sanctions on China, by implication blaming this developing country for the unemployment inflicted on workers here by U.S. capitalist bosses.

But by writing this piece for the Wall Street Journal, rather than for a union or working-class newspaper, Stern is clearly appealing to U.S. capitalists to alter their thinking and embrace government economic planning for their own good. He even accedes to their demands for a "streamlined" government — meaning layoffs and budget cuts — probably hoping this will help win them over.

Unfortunately, he is spitting in the wind.

### What makes planning possible?

It's not that capitalist governments are incapable of planning. Even the U.S. government has an energy plan, a transportation plan, a plan to remodel health insurance, a plan to devise many new weapons systems, a plan to build more prisons, etc. Of course these plans are woefully inadequate when it comes to addressing the huge problems of unemployment, environmental degradation, a crumbling infrastructure and so on.

What the U.S. capitalist government does not have, and cannot have, is an overall plan for the economic development of the country. Yet that is exactly what China does have. So why is China so different from all the capitalist countries now experiencing financial and economic crises?

China allows capitalism to exist — it has stock markets, private ownership of some of the means of production, a growing bourgeoisie, and many social features of capitalism, like a big income gap between rich and poor. But it also has state ownership of the commanding heights of the economy, especially the major banks, as well as the industries vital to China's infrastructure.

That is not the only difference, however. The Chinese state was born out of an earthshaking revolution, led by communists, that continued for decades and mobilized the masses of people to change

society on a scale never reached anywhere else. In the 62 years of its existence, this state has been affected by internal struggles, by the growth of the bourgeoisie and also by the pressure of the masses. It has made many accommodations to the "capitalist roaders," but it has not been overthrown or replaced with a capitalist state. Fundamental institutions, such as massive society-wide government planning for human and social need, remain intact.

China can produce a five-year plan that works because it is not a capitalist state. It can in a few years rebuild an ancient municipality like Chongqing into a huge and mostly modern metropolis the size of Maine, with 32 million people, because it is not shackled with a political structure run behind the scenes by privately owned banks and real estate interests.

Contrast this with New York City, where it has taken 10 years just to begin rebuilding the area of downtown Manhattan destroyed in the 9/11 attacks and where high rents and lack of public housing leave an untold number homeless, especially in the oppressed Black and Latino/a communities. New York has no lack of construction machinery or skilled workers. What it lacks is a government that uses socialist planning in crucial areas of life to respond to the needs of the people rather than to the financiers, the landlords and the speculators.

### Profits at highest level ever — a confirmation of Marx

The capitalist ruling class in the U.S. has reached a peak in its ability to siphon off the wealth of society. This was illustrated most graphically in new government figures on the economy reported in the Nov. 25 New York Times ("Off the Charts: For Business, Golden Days; For Workers, the Dross").

The figures show that in the third quarter of this year, for the first time ever, the percentage of the Gross Domestic Product that went to companies in the form of after-tax profits exceeded 10 percent.

In the same period, the share of the GDP that represents wages and salaries fell below 45 percent, also for the first time ever. And this decline occurred even though the government lumps together workers' wages with the six- and even seven-figure salaries of the highest executives, which are once again on the rise.

What this shows is that capitalism is working exactly the way it is supposed to: It is accumulating capital in the hands of the already very rich, which means it is extracting surplus value from the hides of the workers as never before. Karl Marx rigorously proved a century and a half ago in his three-volume study called "Capital" that the increasing accumulation of profit is rooted in the very essence of capitalist production and cannot be overcome by anything but the organized, militant struggle of the workers themselves.

The workers certainly need a planned economy, not the chaotic and cruel one that capitalism imposes on them, where wars follow recessions and the race for profits never ends. Workers need their talents to be used to build up society, not grow the fortunes of a few. However, the achievement of a planned economy — a socialist economy — is a job that only the workers can carry through, not the CEOs of Intel or Chase Manhattan or any other representatives of the exploiting class. □

## MUNDO OBRERO

# Capitalistas no pueden reparar la crisis que se agudiza

Continúa de página 12

esta crisis para la clase trabajadora es resistencia, movilización y lucha. Millones de trabajadores/as en Europa han salido en huelga contra las medidas de austeridad durante el año pasado. Hasta ahora las clases dominantes no han retrocedido en cara de las huelgas generales y las manifestaciones de corta duración. Es necesario que la lucha sea más amplia y más sostenida.

En los Estados Unidos, el movimiento de Ocupar Wall Street ha señalado el fin de un largo retiro en la lucha. Ha encendido el fuego en sectores del movimiento sindical y estimulado aquí una resistencia renovada. Esperemos que sea el comienzo de una lucha más profunda y amplia la cual debe estar dirigida eventualmente contra el capitalismo estadounidense y el sistema de ganancias y convertida en una

lucha contra los propietarios privados que constituyen el núcleo del fabulosa mente rico 1 por ciento.

Goldstein es el autor de "Low-Wage Capitalism" (El capitalismo de bajos salarios) y "Capitalism at a Dead End" (El capitalismo en un callejón sin salida); los dos puede ser vistos en lowwage-capitalism.com. Se puede comunicar con él en goldstein.f@gmail.com.



# Capitalistas no pueden reparar la crisis que se agudiza

Por Fred Goldstein

Hace más de cuatro años que estalló la burbuja inmobiliaria y cayera la crisis económica capitalista mundial sobre la cabeza de la clase obrera y los/as oprimidos/as en agosto de 2007. A pesar de que se hable de recuperación económica, la plaga del desempleo, el subempleo, la pobreza creciente, los salarios más bajos y la inseguridad general siguen creciendo.

El sufrimiento en EE.UU. va en aumento mientras los banqueros del mundo luchan para salvar miles de millones de dólares para los inversionistas y banqueros que tienen intereses en Europa. En EE.UU., los genios de las estadísticas en Washington han utilizado trucos matemáticos para declarar que la tasa de desempleo ha bajado del 9 por ciento al 8,6 por ciento. Esto se supone que es una buena noticia, “señales positivas” según los maestros de la mentira. Pero para los/as 30 millones de trabajadores/as que están desempleados/as o subempleados/as, esta falsa noticia es un trago amargo.

Las propias cifras del gobierno desmienten su afirmación sobre una caída significativa del desempleo. Las estadísticas muestran que 120.000 empleos nuevos fueron creados en noviembre. Pero el gobierno también dice que se necesitan al menos de 125.000 a 150.000 puestos de trabajo nuevos cada mes sólo para absorber la población de jóvenes que cumplen la edad para comenzar en la fuerza laboral.

El truco para conseguir que la tasa oficial de desempleo baje es reduciendo el tamaño oficial de la fuerza laboral total — aunque los/as trabajadores/as y sus familias que han desaparecido de las cifras oficiales no hayan ido a ninguna parte. Están todavía vivos/as y luchando por sobrevivir.

Al mismo tiempo que se jacta de haber bajado el desempleo, el gobierno ha declarado que la fuerza de trabajo oficial, que incluye tanto a los/as que trabajan como a los/as que están oficialmente desempleados/as, se redujo en casi medio millón — 487.000, un número anormalmente alto. Si se incluyeran como parte de la fuerza laboral a esos/as trabajadores/as desempleados/as que se dice se han retirado de la fuerza laboral, la tasa de desempleo seguiría siendo un 9 por ciento. Sin embargo, la administración Obama y los analistas capitalistas en los medios de comunicación manipulan los números para aseverar que se está avanzando.

Poca mención se hace del hecho de que los salarios disminuyeron y las horas trabajadas se mantuvieron estables. El resultado es que el sueldo neto promedio se redujo en noviembre. Pero más allá de esta creativa hazaña matemática, el panorama se puede ver en un nuevo estudio por Wider Opportunities for Women (Mayores Oportunidades para la Mujer), un grupo de apoyo conocido por desacreditar las estadísticas oficiales sobre la pobreza. Publicó una encuesta el 22 de noviembre mostrando que el 45 por ciento de la población de los EE.UU. vive en un estado de inseguridad económica. (Wowonline.org / livingbelowtheline.asp)

Resumiendo el informe, Donna Addki-

son, ejecutiva de WOW dijo, “Casi la mitad de las familias en la nación no pueden cubrir los costos de los gastos básicos, aún cuando tienen un empleo”. WOW calcula la situación económica mediante el estudio del costo real de la vida, ciudad por ciudad.

Entre las conclusiones está el que el 75 por ciento de los/as trabajadores/as adultos/as con trabajo a tiempo completo aún viven en una inseguridad económica a causa de la caída de los salarios durante la última década. Esto está en consonancia con los recientes hallazgos basados en las estadísticas del Departamento del Censo, que 100 millones de personas en los EE.UU. son pobres o casi pobres. Además, el Departamento de Agricultura reveló recientemente que el número de niños/as que califican para almuerzos escolares gratuitos o subvencionados ha aumentado de 18 millones en 2007 a 21 millones el año pasado. La causa es el desempleo y salarios más bajos entre millones de familias.

## **Empresarios europeos empujan la crisis sobre los/as trabajadores/as**

Mientras tanto, en Europa los banqueros y los empresarios están tratando de resolver sus crisis financieras sobre las espaldas de los/as trabajadores/as a través de la aplicación de programas de austeridad.

Durante esta semana, jefes/as de gobiernos y funcionarios financieros de Europa, con el secretario del tesoro de EE.UU. Timothy Geithner observándoles muy de cerca, se esfuerzan por encontrar una fórmula para “salvar al euro”. Lo que realmente están tratando de salvar es el flujo continuo de los pagos de cientos de miles de millones en intereses y principal de los gobiernos endeudados. Estos gobiernos han llegado a acuerdos en los últimos años con los usureros y prestamistas financieros, a quien respetuosamente se les llama la “comunidad financiera”, que han desangrado a estos gobiernos.

Con la crisis económica, la disminución de la producción y el aumento del desempleo, el ingreso proveniente de los impuestos disminuye drásticamente. A los banqueros no les importa. Solo quieren su dinero. Y la única manera para conseguirlo es imponer austeridad sobre la clase trabajadora.

Ahora hay una complicada lucha entre los distintos gobiernos capitalistas en Europa, aún cuando el gobierno estadounidense está tratando de proteger los intereses de los banqueros aquí. La primera ministra alemana Angela Merkel y el presidente francés Nicolás Sarkozy están en el centro de todo como líderes de los países capitalistas más poderosos del continente.

Mientras la crisis capitalista ha seguido dejándose sentir en las tesorías de los países europeos, los más pobres como Grecia, Portugal e Irlanda, han caído más y más en deuda a los banqueros e inversores privados a fin de cubrir sus gastos. Cuando estaban en peligro de impago de sus deudas, el Banco Central Europeo y el Fondo Monetario Internacional intervinieron para rescatarlos. A cambio, cada uno de estos gobiernos debía elaborar un plan de austeridad para recortar los salarios y

pensiones de los/as trabajadores/as, los gastos públicos, aumentando al mismo tiempo los impuestos.

Ahora España e Italia son incapaces de pagar incluso los intereses de sus enormes deudas, poniendo en peligro toda la estructura financiera. El temor es que los rescates para estas economías serán enormes. Los agentes financieros están exigiendo aún mayores tasas de interés a España e Italia para otorgarles préstamos. Esto empobrece aún más a las tesorías.

La clase dirigente estadounidense y del resto de Europa han estado buscando que los banqueros alemanes se sumen a un rescate. El capitalismo alemán es la economía más fuerte en Europa y la cuarta más grande del mundo. Pero Angela Merkel y el Bundesbank se han resistido. Exigen que se apliquen medidas de austeridad antes de que den su consentimiento para dar alguna ayuda.

El capitalismo alemán domina Europa. Ha colonizado a Europa del este y se ha beneficiado de los países más pobres del sur de Europa. La posición de los banqueros alemanes es: no importa que hayamos explotado a estos países. Ahora están en deuda y tienen que pagar. Nosotros, la clase dominante alemana, no vamos a pagar.

El capital financiero estadounidense, que tiene billones de dólares directa o indirectamente atados en el comercio y las finanzas europeas, está presionando duramente para que los capitalistas alemanes paguen el rescate. Geithner fue a la reunión de los Ministros de Finanzas europeos en Polonia en septiembre y se los dijo. El presidente Barack Obama ha reiterado este ultimátum. Pero los banqueros alemanes imperialistas se han resistido a las exigencias de los señores financieros en Wall Street. Mientras la controversia continuaba, la crisis de la deuda se agudizó aún más hace dos semanas.

Los banqueros e inversionistas, por temor a que los bonos que mantienen del gobierno podrían malograrse, comenzaron a venderlos y a acumular dinero para amortiguarlos de una crisis. Los préstamos disminuyeron. Los banqueros de EE.UU. y la Reserva Federal, temiendo una crisis importante, pestañearon. Tras 10 días de negociaciones secretas orquestadas por el Gobierno británico, el Banco de la Reserva Federal de los EE.UU., los bancos centrales de Bretaña, Canadá, Japón y Suiza y el Banco Central Europeo, acordaron inyectar dólares en Europa a una tarifa reducida a fin de estimular los préstamos temporalmente hasta que se llegue a un arreglo sobre cómo salvar el euro.

## **Capital alemán exige más austeridad**

El 9 de diciembre, se celebraría una reunión de todos los gobiernos para tratar de acordar una forma de salvar la situación. La lucha sobre cómo rescatar a los banqueros gira alrededor de una propuesta de Alemania, parcialmente apoyada por los franceses, dictando directrices presupuestarias a todos los países deudores. Esto significa que la Unión Europea examinaría los presupuestos de los países antes de que se presenten a sus respectivos parlamentos. Los presupuestos podrían ser vetados

y los infractores podrían ser castigados por el Consejo de Justicia Europea.

Hasta ahora [7 de diciembre, fecha original de este artículo - Nota de la Redactora] no hay acuerdo sobre esta propuesta que reforzaría la dominación de Europa por el capital alemán.

Los programas de austeridad para las masas se ha demostrado que empeoran la crisis capitalista. El otoño pasado, Bretaña instituyó el programa de austeridad más severo en su historia, con un recorte del 20 por ciento en los gastos públicos para todos los sectores. Empezó con despidos de trabajadores/as con una meta de terminar hasta 400.000 empleos gubernamentales. Los servicios sociales se debían recortar en todos los niveles. El resultado ha sido un declive de la economía británica. Ahora el primer ministro David Cameron está proponiendo recortes aún más profundos.

Aunque todos los banqueros de Europa están deseosos de medidas de austeridad, los imperialistas alemanes están usando la crisis para fortalecer su dominio sobre Europa a riesgo de precipitar una crisis económica mundial más profunda. En conexión a esta situación es digno de atención notar que, como la clase dominante estadounidense, la clase dominante alemana es aventurista. Como Estados Unidos, que ha fomentado guerras y ocupaciones por todo el mundo, desafiado las leyes internacionales y roto todas las normas de comportamiento internacional, la clase dominante alemana ha iniciado dos guerras mundiales. Para no ser menos, los dirigentes estadounidenses amenazaron al mundo entero con una guerra term nuclear durante la época de la Guerra Fría.

Los imperialistas alemanes están siguiendo la versión económica de “sangre y hierro” en su lucha contra los imperialistas estadounidenses y británicos. A pesar de su poderosa economía industrial y sus bancos, los cuales hacen de Alemania la cuarta economía más grande en el mundo, están todavía subordinados al imperialismo estadounidense y británico. Y la lucha interimperialista ha tomado una aguda forma económica en medio de la crisis económica.

Pase lo que pase en la cumbre europea sobre “el rescate de la zona del euro” — que realmente quiere decir el rescate de las ganancias de los banqueros de la zona del euro, Wall Street y Tokio — no hay manera de evitar el hecho de que el capitalismo ha llegado a un callejón sin salida a nivel mundial.

El sistema capitalista no ha podido crecer y salir de la crisis económica. A más de cuatro años de crisis, el estado capitalista todavía tiene que rescatar el sistema con billones de dólares. El sistema por sí solo no puede ni siquiera mantenerse a flote, mucho menos expandirse. Decenas de millones de trabajadores/as están desempleados/as o subempleados/as, y los capitalistas del mundo están luchando por evitar una nueva crisis — una que se añadiría a la crisis que ya existe para los/as trabajadores/as en todas partes.

Dada esta situación, la única salida de

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